

Daniel Ellsberg - Sept. 17, 1992 - excerpts from talk at Los Alamos National Laboratory

The other part of your question had to do with, what are these inconsistencies in our policy, right? And I wanted to address something else that Carson raised earlier, I mean a historical episode, we talked about a little last night when we were together. I just learned a lot more about it in the last week because I've just read, I started reading a book by Glenn Seaborg, which he gave me called *Stemming the Tide*. I was looking something up in it about the Gilpatric report and I couldn't put it down. I stayed up half the night reading it; it was so interesting to me and I do recommend it to you. What was done in the way of arms control under Johnson, which is the subject of the book and why wasn't more done, why more didn't come to fruition.

As I read, I realized, gee, this is just when I was in the Pentagon and I knew this but I didn't know that; it was extremely interesting. That's why I found it so personally interesting. Now, something that was not in the book. I would suppose Seaborg knew about it was the discussion I just told you in the summer of 1964, what should we do about the Chinese bomb? Should we hit them or not? By the way, since I promised to say - all right, I said I would say a little more about it - I'll just add, the critical point there was semi-technical in part. They concluded that it did not take a nuclear weapon to hit the facilities or to destroy them as we knew. You know, who know what else they had that we didn't know about. But it wouldn't have taken a nuclear strike but it would have taken more conventional bombs than could be plausibly ascribed to the Chinese Nationalists, so it would be that it was a U.S. unilateral actions and that was too... And it was an election year among other things and that was just too big a deal. So they back off, whether they would have done it otherwise anyway.

Now, they talk about the Gilpatric report which I want to get too which is of crucial importance, which came later in the year. But in between is something that again, that Seaborg probably knew about, in fact I know he knew about but did not mention. Still classified I suppose. I think this is all right, I'm going to declassify this.

***** because all the top people, McNamara and Rusk and everybody, were much more involved... They did not have time to deal with Khruschev's ouster, or a Chinese bomb that day, because the topic of that day for them was what should we do to help a French covert action in the Congo on that particular day. Should we give them transport planes to drop French paratroopers into the Congo?

That's a little incident I remembered that shows there are secret priorities within the government, you know. And when the public reads the *Times* and they read about

own problem - they're our friends - than that we have to do it for them. And McNamara was apparently sympathetic to that opinion.

And I'll just mention one little bureaucratic thing that happened, that will be familiar to you, the way things go. The way we actually got this information... I was a special assistant to the assistant Secretary of Defense, ISA, which in those days was a more powerful assistant secretary ship than it came to be later, much bigger. The decision had basically been made under Rusk and McNamara - between Rusk and McNamara - to help the Indians. Big secret, I've certainly never seen that in print anywhere else. The decision had been made. Now, as I already knew but was to learn much more, when McNamara had agreed in something with somebody else or he'd made a decision with the President or with Rusk or anybody, he did not like reclaims on that, he did not like that reopened. And my boss McNaughton, then, knew better than to want to reopen something with him. He just didn't do it. When the decision is made, it is democratic centralism as we call it in the Pentagon. We didn't call it in the Pentagon.

So, in this one occasion, the only time I ever knew in fifteen years, we got a group of all the deputy assistant secretaries and I was at that rank, got together and we made an approach to McNaughton. And we said, we know how you hate to do this, but we think this issue is so important that we should not let that go, it has gone to fast here. That should be reopened. You should go to McNamara in our opinion, with all deference, to tell him to reopen that issue and look again at that question, because it doesn't look good to us as a breach in the anti-proliferation policy. So, actually McNaughton was impressed. He'd never encountered this solid front before. He did go to McNamara and he said, you know, it's an unusual situation, I have these young kids who are very dedicated and brilliant and so forth and they all feel and they've convinced me that you really ought to open it. He came back and said that McNamara was reluctant but he would in fact reopen it, the question.

Now I learn from Seaborg - and I'll try to make this brief, it's really quite crucial - what happened next, which I didn't know at the time. I never did know. It wasn't my area and I didn't keep on top of it. The President - I'm sure, directly as a result of McNamara's opening this up - named a new panel under Deputy Secretary Gilpatric, whom I used to work for, who had retired in January from the Defense Department, on the subject of non-proliferation, raised by this issue. Called it the Gilpatric panel. And this is what I was just reading three nights ago.

That panel was some panel. Acheson, Lovett, McCloy, Allen Dulles, Jim Fiske, Thomas Watson of IBM, General Gruenthaler of NATO. This is the heaviest panel I can remember. It was comparable to a couple of others but this is heavy. And they met several times. Gruenthaler later said, it was the best staffed study he was ever on. He thought the conclusions were the best he had ever seen. It said, it's a pity that it came to nothing and here's what happened. Gilpatric briefed the President in January of 1965 saying, we did not start unanimous. We have ended up unanimous on the following subject. Anti-proliferation, opposing proliferation across the board is in the highest

interests of the United States. We reject the view - raised by the Secretary of State and McNamara, who were at the briefing -

that it is in our interests or that we can even accept India and Japan getting this weapon. It couldn't stop there. If they get it, others will get it, and we won't like a number of the ones who get it. And we don't even want them to have it in various ways. Very precise.

The MLF. Some of you will remember the Multilateral Force. You know, one of the great insane, cockamamie ideas of all time in my opinion, unless there is some fanatic MLF supporter in the room, I don't know. [The MLF] was in the way of anti-proliferation, because we were dedicated to it still. And they made this precise, they said, that should be reopened. It's a matter of priority. If this gets in the way of anti-proliferation, which it did, proliferation should be the highest priority on this. And then they made some other recommendations. So they said, there are three things that have to be done.

The reason I'm going into this, is, this is almost the definition of what I tried to design, the Manhattan Project II. There have to be three areas, I should quote it right here exactly. International agreements, changes in U.S. policy and beefing up of intelligence and inspection capabilities. On agreements: an immediate Comprehensive Test Ban; an agreement to end the production of fissionable materials and inspection requirements and various other things. Coming out now, remember the panel, who I told you this just was.

Rusk's reaction to this was. He disagreed, first. He then said, this report is as explosive as a nuclear weapon. It must be kept secret. The existence of written report - and I'm sorry now that, what's the guys name that left, had to leave, because this was exactly the point he was raising you know, and that you were raising earlier about secrecy... He said, the existence of this secret [report], the fact that there is a recommendation like this must not be known. And when six months later when it did begin to leak out that there had been a report in the newspapers, Seaborg was getting requests, [as he noted] in his diary, let's see the report. Oh, the Congressional committee on Atomic Energy, says, let's have a copy of that. He says, what should I do? The first reaction that he was told by the President was, tell them there is no report. This is the Congressional committee on Atomic Energy.

Oh, by the way, just to show another thing, Seaborg was told by the President, you get a copy but you cannot show it to your fellow commissioners. He said, this put me in a terrible spot. I was just one among equals on that Commission. I wasn't running the Commission in those days. I had no right to have information the others didn't have and this was very embarrassing. But in other words, the fact that there were recommendations of this was so [secret] and why was that. Because as McGeorge Bundy and McNamara both put it: the fact that we are discussing within the government whether we should oppose proliferation is a very, very sensitive [matter] because of course it goes against our declared policy that we do oppose proliferation across the board. That's very simple.

The answer is, the report was not released. They did not acknowledge there was a report at the time. It has now been released in part but parts of it are still - twenty-five years later - regarded as classified. Seaborg couldn't quote them. I suggested to a Senatorial office just the other day that they ought to take a look at that report and see whether it wouldn't be worth getting it declassified further as a historical matter. But the final thing - [raised] by the man who left here - and this is such an important point. I'll sum up with this. The reality is that the United States Government has not had an unequivocal, unambiguous, unambivalent policy against proliferation over the last thirty and forty years. I can't speak for, I don't know, one administration after another.

I was discussing this with Mort Halperin (who worked for Kissinger) after I read it two days ago. He had of course known of Rusk's attitude as I had. He came after me in ISA. He then worked for Kissinger. He said Kissinger had the identical attitudes to Rusk. Why shouldn't the Indians have it, why shouldn't the Japanese have it. Well, there's two administrations.

What I'm saying is, the world has not seen what could be done to oppose proliferation with the factor of a dedicated, coherent U.S. policy opposing proliferation, because contrary to our public stance, that has not been the clear, at least continuously, the policy. That isn't to say we just want proliferation everywhere or that we have never done anything to oppose it. We have in a number of ways. But there hasn't been that coherent gathering together of all the different policies, use policy, inspection. There hasn't been the priority given to it. Many other things have overridden the importance.

I don't suppose Bush wanted Iraq to have a nuclear weapon. He knew they were seeking it. It's perfectly plain that he had priorities there on the whole of better relations of Iraq so as to confront Iran and so forth, that overrode acting on the information that he had about Iraq's program. That is not a high priority anti-proliferation program. So I sum up in one sentence. I propose that we have as a matter of national decision and policy, after debate and consideration, an urgent high priority anti-proliferation policy and let us discuss together as LBJ used to say, let us talk together, about how best to achieve that.